

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2012-0043-EA

Lease/Serial Case File No. AZA 32288

Bureau of Land Management, Kingman Field Office

Proposed Action Title/Type: Right-of-Way Amendment

Location of Proposed Action: secs. 15, 26, 35, T. 17 N., R. 13 W. G&SRM.

Applicant (if any): Mohave Electric Cooperative, Inc. (MEC)

INTRODUCTION

In 2010 U.S. Highway 93 was widened to a four lane highway in the Deluge Wash area. During this project a portion of MEC's power line authorized under Right-of-Way (ROW) AZA 32288 was relocated outside of the ROW boundaries in secs. 15, 26, and 35, T. 17 N., R. 13 W., G&SRM., without an amendment to allow MEC to do so. MEC believed the permitting process for this re-alignment would be done in conjunction with permitting the highway construction and no amendment to the power line ROW would be necessary. In May 2011, after MEC was made aware of this requirement, an application was submitted to amend this ROW for this realignment.

CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLAN

This proposed action is in conformance with the Kingman Resource Management Plan approved March 1995. Remarks: RMP Decision number and narrative: **Decision LR13a:** Minor ROWs would be evaluated through the environmental review process and granted or rejected on a case-by-case basis. Existing ROWs would be used when possible to minimize surface disturbance (Kingman RMP, p. 66).

Comment: ROW AZA 32288 and the proposed amendment to it are considered a minor ROW.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the action is to respond to MEC's request for the ability to continue using the portions of the power line which was realigned due to highway construction. The need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibility under the Federal Land Management and Policy Act and 43 CFR Part 2800 to grant or deny a ROW upon the submission of a complete application.

DECISION TO BE MADE

The BLM authorized Officer will decide to amend the ROW described in the Proposed Action Alternative, deny the amendment, or approve it with modifications.

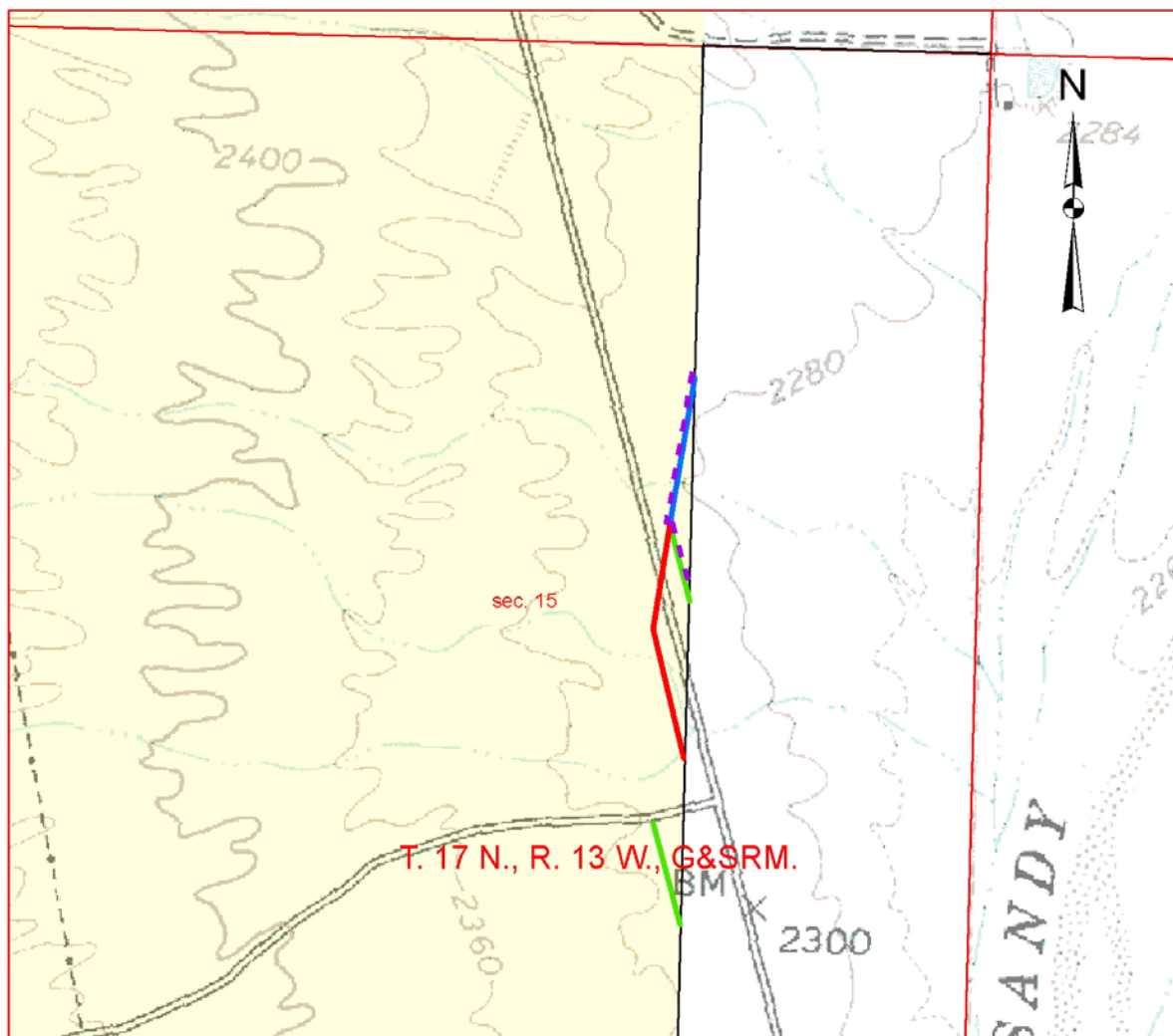
DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The proposed action would be to amend ROW AZA 32288 to add additional areas for the realigned power line and to recognize the relinquishment of those portions of the ROW that are no longer occupied by the power line in secs. 15, 26, and 35, T. 17 N., R. 13 W., G&SRM. The width for the additional ROW segments would be 20 feet, the same as the existing ROW width. The proposed amendment would also include approximate 2,326 feet of access roads which existed prior to the realignment and is still needed to access the power line but were not included in the ROW as well as an additional 1,500 feet of access road that was constructed to access the realigned portions of power line. Combined, these affect approximately 1.054 acres. The proposed amendment would also clarify access on Bureau of Land Management administered public lands. This clarification categorizes the access into the following: improved (bladed) within the 20 foot wide power line ROW;

improved (bladed) outside the 20 foot wide power line ROW; unimproved access (overland travel) within the 20 foot wide power line ROW. The disturbed width for the improved access roads is approximately 10 feet, so the width for analysis herein is 12 feet, which would also be the width described in the amended ROW for the improved access roads.

Refer to Table 1 and Maps 1, 2, and 3 for details of the proposed action components.

Section T,17N.,R. 13W.,G& SRM.	ROW to be added (feet/acres)	ROW to be removed (feet/acres)	ROW for Bladed Access Roads Outside of the 20 foot Width Power Line ROW (feet/acres)	ROW for Bladed Access Roads Within 20 foot Width Power Line ROW (feet/acres)	Overland Access w/in ROW Area (in feet)
15	835/0.383	1,090/0.500	0/0	1,030/0.284	480
26	800/0.367	0/0	1,600/0.441	0/0	3,125
35	1,335/0.613	2,270/1.042	358/0.099	838/0.231	2,865
Totals	2,972/1.363	3,360/1.543	1,958/0.539	1,868/0.515	6,470

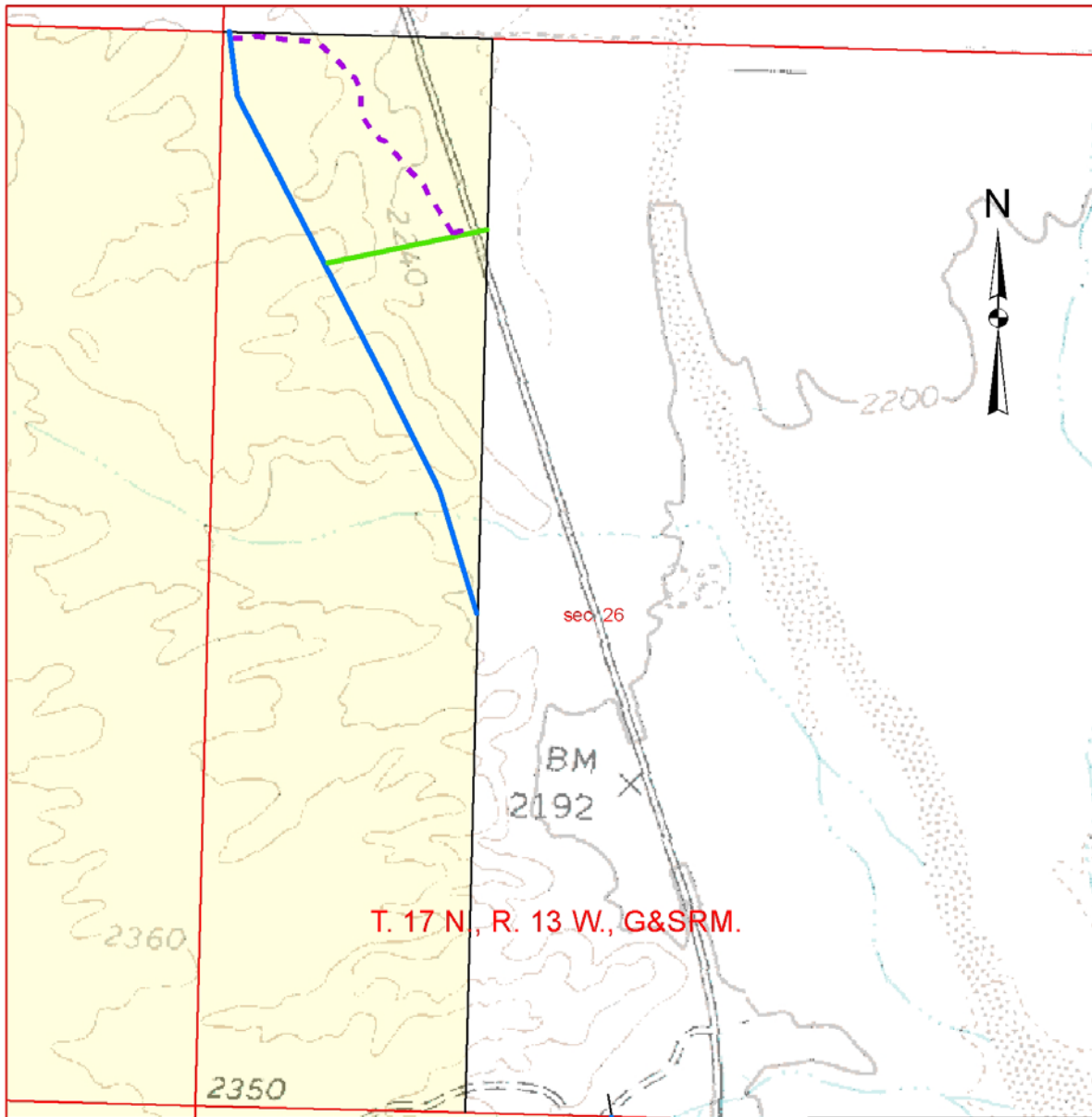


No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for the use of the data for purposes not intended by the BLM.

Map 1

0 0.0350.07 0.14 Miles

LEGEND	
—	Existing ROW To Remain
—	Removed Power Line
—	New Power Line
---	Improved Access Road



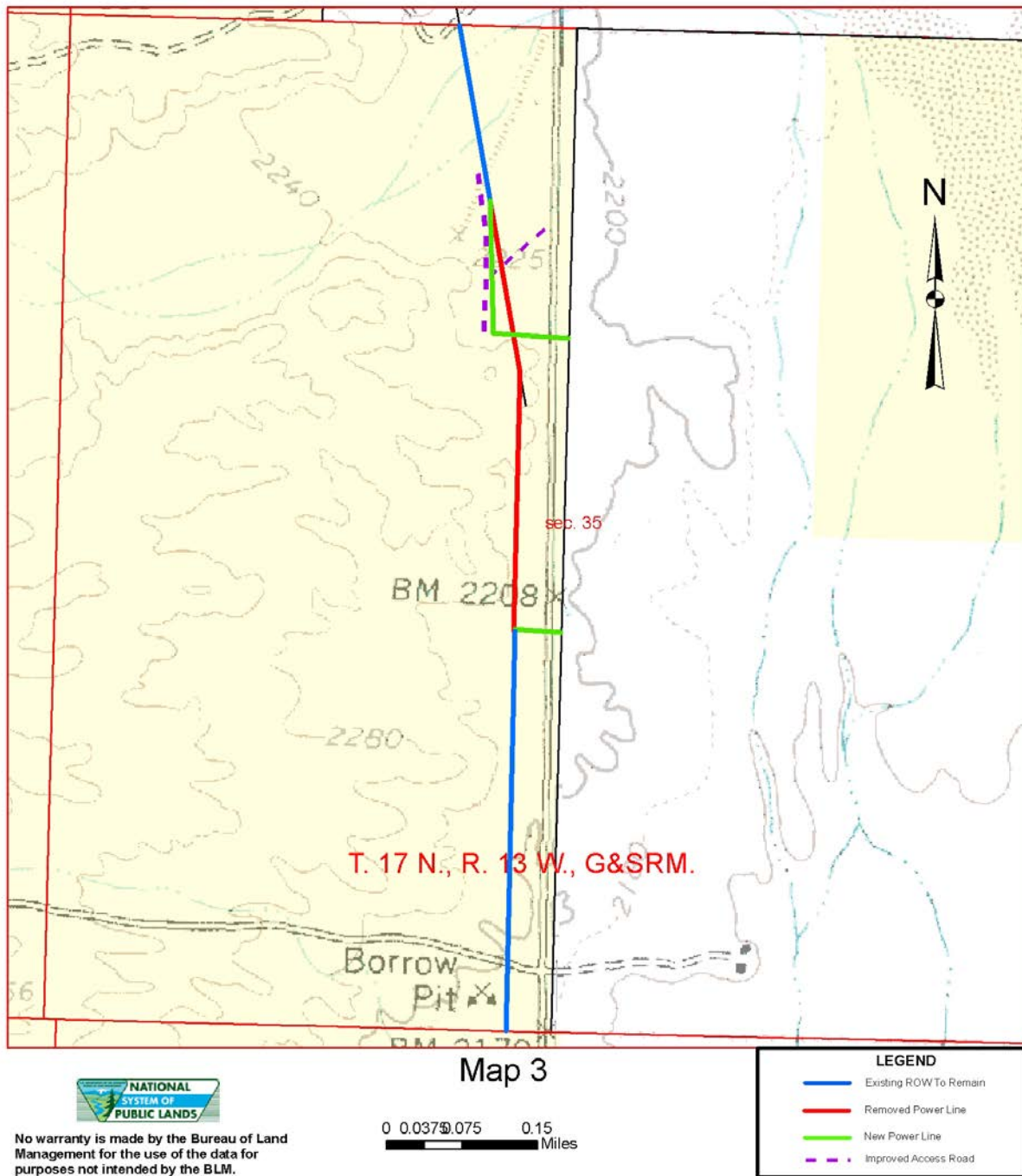
No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for the use of the data for purposes not intended by the BLM.

Map 2

0 0.0375 0.075 0.15 Miles

LEGEND

- Existing ROW To Remain
- Removed Power Line
- New Power Line
- - Improved Access Road



DESCRIPTION OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the no action alternative the amendment to the ROW would be denied.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the KFO Project Scoping Form found in the Administrative Record for this proposal. Resources of concern that are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis will not be discussed here. Resources which could be impacted by the proposed action or alternatives are discussed below.

This section describes the existing conditions of the environment and expected impacts. The table below summarizes the resources reviewed for this project. Resources not present within the project study area, as well as those present and not affected, are not discussed. Those resources that have been identified by an interdisciplinary team as present and potentially affected are discussed further below.

Table 2 PROJECT RESOURCE review			
Resources Considered	Not Present	Present and Not Affected	Present and/or Potentially Affected
Air Quality*		X	
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*	X		
Cultural and Historic*	X		
Environmental Justice* / Socioeconomics	X		
Floodplains*		X	
Grazing		X	
Hazardous or Solid Waste*	X		
Invasive and Non-native Species*	X		
Land Use		X	
Migratory Birds*		X	
Native American Religious Concerns*	X		
Prime and Unique Farmland*	X		
Threatened and Endangered Species*	X		
Vegetation			X
Visual Resources			X
Water Quality*	X		
Wetland or Riparian Zones*	X		
Wild and Scenic Rivers*	X		
Wilderness*	X		
Wildlife			X
* Consideration Required By Law or Executive Order			

Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat

The affected environment is located approximately 8 to 10 miles north of Wikieup, Arizona adjacent to U.S. Highway 93. The elevation ranges from approximately 2,200 to 2280 ft. amsl. The vegetation community is dominated by paloverde (*Parkinsonia microphyllum*), Palo Christi (*Canotia halocantha*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), flattop buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) and white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*).

The project area is within Category 3 Desert Tortoise habitat. The area's general fauna is dominated by various bird, lizard, snake, and rodent species with coyote, bobcat, and raptors being the dominant predators.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

The proposed action is within VRM Class IV. The objective for Class IV VRM allows for changes which may subordinate the landscape character. The primary casual viewers would be viewing the realigned power line from U.S. Highway 93 and from the one or two residences on adjacent private lands.

IMPACTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat

The changes to the power line have resulted in approximately 0.412 acres of residual vegetation and wildlife habitat loss from the construction and future use and maintenance of approximately 1,500 feet of new access roads. The approximate 2,326 feet of access roads which existed prior to the power line realignment affecting approximate 0.642 acres would be incorporated into the amended ROW as part of the proposed action. Of this only approximately 658 feet of access road affecting approximately 0.181 acres is used only for access to the power line, so the remainder of approximately 1,672 feet of prior existing access roads affecting approximately 0.461 would likely remain regardless of the decision to be made.

It is estimated that approximately 0.01 acres of vegetation and wildlife habitat were residually disturbed by approximately 10 pole structures. These were replaced by approximately 10 new pole structures, so the residual impacts from pole structures remains at approximately 0.01 acres of disturbance.

It is anticipated that approximately 1.49 acres would be periodically impacted by overland vehicle travel within the ROW area where there are no roads. Based on observations of the existing power line where there is little to no evidence of disturbance from vehicle access it is estimated that this disturbance would be short term.

The overall residual impacts to vegetation and wildlife habitat from the proposed action would yield a net gain of approximately 0.593 acres.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

The impacts to the visual resources from the realigned power line are comparable to the power line in its original alignment; therefore no further impacts to VRM have occurred or would continue should the ROW be amended to authorize the realigned power line. The objectives for VRM management in this area would be met.

IMPACTS FROM THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The impacts from the No Action Alternative would be the loss of electrical service to residents and businesses served by this distribution line.

Cumulative Impacts

The historic development of the area for dispersed agriculture, which has resulted in dispersed residences along with U.S. Highway 93 dominates the past and current impacts to the affected environment. The old and new power line alignments make up a small portion of the cumulative impacts in the area. It is anticipated that in the future U.S. Highway 93 would become an interstate highway, which would enlarge the highway's footprint by the addition of frontage roads and associated developments.

DESCRIPTION OF MITIGATION MEASURES AND RESIDUAL IMPACTS:

In addition to the terms, conditions, and stipulations of the proposed ROW (see the attached draft ROW

amendment for these) MEC would be required to compensate for the 0.422 acres of public land residually impacted by the realigned power line.

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:

Preparer(s): Andy Whitefield, BLM KFO Environmental Protection Specialist
Environmental Coordinator: Ramone McCoy
Len Marceau, Outdoor Recreation Planner (VRM)
Tim Watkins, Archaeologist
Ammon Wilhelm, Wildlife Biologist

Bureau of Land Management, Kingman Field Office
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

NEPA Document Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2012-0043-EA

Finding of No Significant Impact: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that impacts are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

/s/ Ruben A. Sánchez
Field Manager, Kingman

01/15/2013
Date

DECISION RECORD

NEPA Document Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-C010-2012-0043-EA

Decision: The decision is to amend ROW AZA 32288 to authorize the portions of the power line that were realigned for the expansion of Highway 93 and to approve the relinquishment of the areas formerly covered by the ROW but no longer needed.

Rationale for Decision: Although the portions of the power line were realigned were done so without authorization, Mohave Electric Cooperative, the ROW Holder, believed that it was authorized to do so under the process for realigning Highway 93. The environmental consequences resulting from the realigned power line were insignificant and terms and conditions are included in the ROW amendment which would provide future protections to the environment.

Stipulations: See the attached ROW Grant amendment.

/s/ Ruben A. Sánchez
Field Manager, Kingman

01/15/2013